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AFGHANISTAN: THE PRESENT SEAT OF WAR,
AND THE RELATIONS OF THAT COUNTRY
TO ENGLAND AND RUSSIA.

BY MAJOR A. G. CONSTABLE.

It is a few days over forty years—indeed, it is just forty years and forty days—since I stood, one of a very thoroughly equipped, if not very large, English army, on the plains of Ferozepore, drawn up in full review order to receive a powerful Sikh Prince, with whom we wished to form an alliance. This Prince was a man about sixty years of age, and older in his appearance than his three-score might warrant. A life of constant intrigue, war and debauchery had bent his form, and withered what had once been a lithe and active frame. The great reception lasted for three days. On the first the chieftain was seated on an elephant, dressed plainly enough, excepting that the celebrated Koh-i-noor, stolen from the man whose cause he was now to join the English in espousing, blazed like a small sun from his sword arm, where it was fastened in a golden bracelet. I happened at the left of my troop to be very near his Majesty as he passed ; and I could not help noticing that the one bright eye in his wrinkled and somewhat forbidding face took in at a glance every object ; and every object there must have been strange and new to this Eastern despot. Words fail me adequately to describe the cavalcade which surrounded and followed him. His escort were mounted on superb horses, the riders covered for the most part with the brightest gold, steel and silver-linked armor. Accustomed as we were to the gorgeous displays of the native chiefs of British India, the concurrent expressions in our mess-tents in the evening were to the effect that there never had been seen a handsomer, more richly-dressed, or more soldier-like set of men than surrounded this old warrior on this occasion. This splendid monarch was the famous Runjeet Singh, the Maharajah, or King, of Lahore.

It is not necessary to my purpose this evening to describe in greater detail the meeting between the Sikh monarch and the Earl of Auckland, Governor-General of India. Enough that I should tell you that they were met there to arrange definitely for the invasion of Afghanistan, there to dispossess Dost Mahomed Khan, the reigning Ameer at Cabul, and to restore to his throne Shah Soojah, who, nearly 30 years before, had been driven from it by his own brother, Mahmoud, a weak and dissolute man, who proved no more than a puppet in the hands of his vizier, Futteh Khan, the head of the Barukzyes, one of the two great families of Afghanistan—the other being the Suddozyes, the head of which was the deposed Soojah. Futteh Khan was the eldest of twenty brothers, by various mothers—the youngest of the twenty being Dost Mahomed Khan, whom the English were now about to dethrone.

The story of the great Dost's rise to power is a true Eastern romance. He began life as a sweeper at a sacred tomb, but obtained the favor of his powerful brother, who, though nominally only the Vizier or Prime Minister, was actually the ruler of the country, by killing in the open street, when only fourteen years of age, one of the Minister's most powerful enemies. Dost Mahomed Khan was a born ruler of men, and soon showed what metal there was in him when his great brother was seized by Prince Kamran, son of the reigning Ameer, who caused him to be cruelly murdered, after having himself put his eyes out with the point of a dagger—a brutal act, which overthrew the long-tottering dynasty of the Suddozyes, who had been kings in Cabul since Ahmed Shah founded the Afghan Empire, in 1747. Dost Mahomed's vengeance was sudden and no less brutal. It would not avail us to enter into the story of his rise to the chief seat of power. Enough to say, that in 1838 he nominally ruled over the whole of Afghanistan, with the exception of Herat, where Kamran, the murderer of Futteh Khan, still reigned, the last remnant of the legitimate line, save the exiled Soojah, a fugitive in British India, who, with his eldest brother, Shah Zeman, a blind old man, was supported by the bounty of the English.

In mentioning Herat, I have named the place which was the real cause of the great gathering at Ferozepore, and the ill-starred alliance between the English and the Sikhs. A glance at any good map of the northwestern frontier of Hindostan will show that this

place, Herat, is correctly styled the gateway of India. All the great invasions of India have taken place by armies passing to the southward of Herat, through the Bolan Pass, on to the plains of the Indus. So it came to be the firm belief with every Governor-General of India and his Council that it was of paramount importance to the safety of the British supremacy in India that this gateway and its keys should be in the possession of a power friendly to the British.

So far back as the beginning of the century, fears had been entertained that Napoleon, in alliance with Alexander of Russia, would, by the connivance, if not the active assistance of the Persians, pour into India a well-disciplined army through this oft-trodden path. A mission, at an enormous outlay of money, had been sent to the Persian monarch's capital, with substantial inducements to the Persians to refuse to permit of any such invasion. Accordingly the Emperor of Persia entered into an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the British. Of what value this treaty might really have been to the English, it is needless now to inquire, for soon after it had been negotiated an event took place which removed the immediate cause of danger against which it was intended to provide. The story of the rupture between Napoleon and the Russian is too well known to need recital here.

One article of this Persian treaty, however, is worthy of notice. It was to the effect that in the event of war arising between India and Afghanistan, Persia should invade the latter at the cost of the former.

The English were not content, however, and very wisely not content, with making provision against a possible *Afghan* war alone. They felt that there would be at least equal danger to their Eastern Empire from a *Persian* war, should the Shah at any time take up the sword against them. So the Indian Government, in 1808, sent Mountstuart Elphinstone on a friendly mission to the court of Cabul. The English envoy was not allowed to penetrate into the country, however, being met at Peshawur by the reigning Ameer, Shah Soojah, who received him in royal state, seated on a golden throne blazing with jewels, chief of which shone forth in a gorgeous bracelet, the mighty Koh-i-noor—magnificence which, great though it was, did not outshine the English, for the entire mission was on a scale of profuse splendor, lavishing costly presents

as if they were pebbles. Shah Soojah was very friendly, and bound himself to treat any nation in alliance with Persia much in the same way as the Persian monarch had promised to treat the Afghans.

Moscow and Waterloo removed all fears of a French invasion of India, but in its stead slowly, and like a huge nightmare, arose the shadow of Russia. Shadowy the danger to India might appear, but it was an actual presence to one of her neighbors, for the annexation of Georgia to the empire of the Czar brought the eagles of Russia to the frontier of Persia. For many long years the Persians appear to have existed in daily dread of their great northern neighbor, until in 1826 Abbas Mirza, heir to the Persian throne, threw down the gauntlet to Russia, and was badly whipped for his temerity.

The treaty to which I have just alluded bound England to help Persia when the latter should be involved in war with any European nation ; but at the critical moment this help was not forthcoming, and in 1828 all that Great Britain cared to do for her quondam ally was to induce her to conclude a humiliating treaty with the Czar, by which Persia lost two provinces and practically her whole defensive frontier to the north. In the words of an English author, Persia was delivered, bound hand and foot, to the court of St. Petersburg. The territory thus acquired by Russia was nearly equal in extent to the whole of England, and her outposts were brought within a few days' march of the Persian capital.

Futteh Ali, then Emperor of Persia, was, in spite of their faithlessness, faithful to his English allies ; but the Russians had found means to sow the seeds of enmity against the British in the breast of Mahomed Shah, who ascended the Persian throne in 1834, a firm friend and ally of the Russians. He believed that with their assistance he could extend his empire to the east, thus indemnifying himself for the northern provinces lost by the stupidity of his own father, Mirza. He had long dreamed of recovering Herat, lying to the east of his dominions, which had been formerly a part and parcel of them, and he now made a determined attempt to realize his dream. He laid siege to Herat. It was well understood in India that this siege of Herat by the Persians was encouraged by Russia. Indeed, the English Minister of Foreign

Affairs said, in a letter to Count Nesselrode, that while the British envoy at Teheran was endeavoring to dissuade the Shah from such an enterprise, the Russian envoy was giving advice of an opposite tendency; while one was preaching moderation and peace, the other was inciting to war and conquest; and whilst the one pointed out the difficulties and expense of the enterprise, the other inspired hopes of money and assistance. While a Russian agent was doing this at Teheran, another Russian agent was guaranteeing a treaty injurious to British interests between Mahomed Shah and the Sirdars or Chiefs of Candahar. At this critical juncture also a Russian agent, Vickovich, appeared at Cabul, endeavoring by the most lavish promises to deter Dost Mahomed from allying himself with the British, desiring him to look for support to the Persian king and his Russian backers.

The fate of this Vickovich was truly Russian. On his return to St. Petersburg the protests of the British had affected the memory of Count Nesselrode, who, on receipt of his agent's card asking for an audience indignantly refused to see him, saying that he knew no *Colonel* Vickovich, only having heard of a mercantile adventurer so called. The unfortunate man understood the meaning of this, returned at once to his lodgings, destroyed his papers, and then himself, by blowing out his brains.

To counteract this attempt to establish Russian influence in Afghanistan, the Indian Government had despatched to Cabul an envoy in the person of Alexander Burnes, who had some years before passed through that country as a private traveller. Whatever might have been the real purposes of the Indian Government, their envoy was so hampered by instructions that his mission was a fruitless one, as he himself well knew it would be when starting on it. He was instructed to demand from Dost Mahomed Khan the dismissal of the Russian envoy, with a refusal to hold any official intercourse whatever with the Russian people. In fact, the Dost was required to give up all friendly intercourse with any other people than the British, in return for which the English envoy was instructed to promise that the English would very kindly regard the Afghan ruler, who must be content with their bare recognition. The English would give or promise nothing more. Of course Burnes's mission ended as a farce.

While Burnes was vainly endeavoring to persuade Dost Mahomed

that British smiles were worth more to him than Russian gold, the siege of Herat, in the western part of Afghanistan, was vigorously pressed by the Persians. That Herat did not fall into the hands of the Shah, was mainly due to the accidental presence of a young English officer, Eldred Pottinger, who assisted the Afghan ruler and his astute, but wily and unscrupulous, minister, Yar Mahomed, to withstand the Russian forces. Oddly enough, while an English officer had thus charge of the defenses, the British and Russian envoys were both in the besieger's camp, the one begging the Shah to withdraw his forces, and the other with promises and ready money encouraging the Shah to persevere. In an evil hour some of the Persian officials insulted the English envoy, who sent to Bombay for a naval force, to descend upon the coast of Persia, to take vengeance for his insulted dignity. The force sent was absurdly small, but the appearance of two regiments of English red-coats at Karrack was a hint which the Shah was prompt to understand, and, to the amazement of the besieged, not less than to their intense relief, the Persian army retreated from before Herat, the position they had occupied eighteen weary months. Herat was thus saved from falling into the hands of Persia.

As I have said, the district of Herat was held by a Suddozye chief, a relative of Shah Soojah, who was to be restored to the throne of Cabul by the aid of British bayonets, assembled at Ferrozepore and elsewhere. Time will only permit of a glance at the story of the invasion of Afghanistan. Sufficient to say that the meeting between the English viceroy and the Sikh monarch I have already described, resulted in a tripartite alliance between these two parties and Shah Soojah, the claimant to the Afghan throne, upon which war was declared by the Indian Government.

Entering the country by the Bolan Pass in the west, the English rapidly occupied Candahar, Ghuznee and Cabul. The fall of Ghuznee, supposed to be the strongest fortress in the country, so disheartened the Afghan chiefs that they deserted the standard of Dost Mahomed, and flocked to offer their submission to the British. Dost Mahomed Khan fled across the Hindu Koosh, where he hoped to gather followers who could and would resist the British. His hopes were vain. Treachery and bribery were too strong for him to resist, and one evening, when the

British resident at the court of the new ruler, Shah Soojah, was taking his daily ride, he was surprised by the appearance of two solitary horsemen, more strange, if more real, than any of G. P. R. James's famous horsemen, one of whom riding up to McNaghten, the resident, tendered him his sword, acknowledging himself to be Dost Mahomed, and asking only that he should be shielded from the vengeance of his triumphant rival. McNaghten, like every other person who ever came in contact with the Dost, was very much struck by the noble, simple bearing of the fallen chief, and received him with every proper kindly expression. Dost Mahomed was subsequently sent, a prisoner of state, to Calcutta, where he lived a quiet and retired life for a couple of years, gaining the respect and good-will of every one, until the exigencies of the State compelled the British Government to send him back as a ruler of his people.

It had been hoped by Lord Auckland, that when once Shah Soojah should be seated on his throne, the English troops could be withdrawn and he left to the care of his own subjects. This hope proved a sad delusion. The fickle Afghans, glad as they were to turn out the great Baruksye Sirdar, were far from inclined to accept Soojah in his place. But there was such a general appearance of tranquillity throughout the country that McNaghten, believing what he wished to believe, that Soojah had really a place in the affections of his people, allowed part of the English forces to return to India. While the garrisons were thus weakened, Akbar Khan, son of Dost Mahomed, was plotting against Shah Soojah and his English allies. McNaghten had been created a baronet and appointed Governor of Bombay, and on the very day fixed upon for his departure to the British provinces, a rising took place in the city of Cabul, in which Burnes resided. Burnes and his brother were massacred. McNaghten upon this entered into negotiations with Akbar Khan to retire with all the British troops from Cabul to Peshawur, Akbar Khan agreeing to give them safe conduct through the mountain passes of the Khyber. Immediately after this treaty was made, Akbar Khan invited McNaghten to meet him in his tent for a final conference. McNaghten went, accompanied by three officers of his staff. The two great men retired to confer alone. Angry words were heard to pass. A

pistol shot rang out, and in an instant the lifeless body of the English envoy lay quivering on the sands. The same moment the three attendant English officers were seized by men standing behind them. Tied with cords, they were placed on horses, each still held by the strong arms that had bound him, and carried from the scene at a rapid pace. One of the three managed to release himself and alight on the ground, only to be cut to pieces by the enraged multitude. The other two were carried off to a place of safety and finally returned to India.

Various reasons have been assigned for this monstrous act. It was believed at the time by well informed persons in India that Akbar Khan had that morning been put in possession of positive proof that, while McNaghten was treating with him for the peaceable evacuation of Cabul, he was inducing certain hill tribes, by a lavish promise of English gold, to seize the person of Akbar Khan himself. It was asserted that he had produced this proof to McNaghten, and then slain him with his own hand. In Afghan morality, this bloody act was simple justice. After the death of McNaghten and Burnes, the chief direction of the English defense fell upon General Elphinstone, an old Pall Mall dandy, as brave and incompetent as any man that ever lived. Again, time will not allow me to enter into details of the retreat of the British forces. Suffice it to say here, that the oft-told story of only one man having escaped to tell the horrid tale to the garrison at Jellalabad, is not correct. Akbar Khan took personal charge of all the sick and wounded officers, all the women and their husbands, who were in garrison in Cabul. They were prisoners, of course, but they were treated as well as their captor's straightened means would allow, and I may say here that when the avenging armies of England, under Pollock and Nott, entered Afghanistan, they were all rescued in sound health, travel-stained and weary, excepting the poor old General, who had died, the worn out with gout and old age.

The English invaded Afghanistan in the spring of 1839, and made a grand triumphal entry into the capital, Cabul, in August of the same year. On the 6th of January, 1842, the fatal march through the Khoord Cabul Pass commenced.

In June, 1839, two months before Shah Soojah entered his capital, under British escort, old Runjeet Singh died, and nine years later the country over which he had ruled became incorporated with

the British Dominions. His descendant, the Maharajah Dhuleep Singh, is in the enjoyment of an enormous pension—a quarter of a million dollars per annum, living the easy life of an English country gentleman, keeping his pack of hounds, and hunting them with courage and discretion. I believe he is considered a Royal personage, and entitled to all the privileges and immunities that distinction implies. Verily, the days of romance are not passed ! How that one eye of the old Lion of the Punjaub would glare at a descendant of his riding to hounds in an English county, dressed in the orthodox scarlet and top boots, and I who am talking to you, and not yet an old man, have witnessed these changes.

Shah Soojah was murdered soon after the English were driven from Cabul, and Dost Mahomed Khan was restored to his throne in the same year, 1842. He reigned peaceably, and, so far as the English was concerned, honestly and justly, until his death in 1863.

The virtual extermination of the British force in Cabul was a stunning blow to the English in India, but they soon recovered from its effects, thanks to the courage, intrepidity and decision of the officers of the Indian army. Civilians might talk of evacuation, and final withdrawal, but soldiers said “No ; not until our comrades are avenged and our prisoners rescued !” The defense of Jellalabad by Sir Robert Sale, and of Candahar by Gen. Nott ; the gloriously triumphant converging marches of Nott and Pollock, and their gallant and soldierly assumption of the responsibility which the Governor-General threw upon them ; the march into Cabul, and the rescue of the English prisoners from beyond the Hindu-Koosh, are all parts of a story which I should love to tell, if time allowed. They form one of the most glorious pages in English history.

An invasion of Hindostan in the present day is no idle fear ; what *has* been, *may be*, although truly the condition of the country is very different under the powerful rule of a warlike and wealthy nation like the British, to the state of things when she was an easy prey to any of her northern neighbors who cast longing eyes upon her treasures. The first invasion is supposed to have occurred B. C. 518, when the king of Persia, Darius Hystaspes, crossed the Indus, with the fatal result for India of a great increase of his revenue, and from that time dates the unhappy renown of India as a land of fabulous wealth, meaning, really, a land which might be easily plundered. The Afghan Mahmoud of Ghuzni, A. D. 1000

to 1024, made twelve expeditions against the cities and temples on the plains of India.

Two hundred years later, Genghis Khan, at the head of his Tartar and Scythian hordes, followed in the footsteps of Mahmoud. After Genghis, at an interval of nearly 200 years—that is, in 1398—Timour the Tartar, or Timour Leng, as he was styled from his lameness, or Tamerlane, as we call him, penetrated to Delhi, which, after capturing, he gave up to rapine and pillage. It is said that every soul above fifteen years of age was ruthlessly butchered by his rabble soldiery.

Timour did not remain long in Delhi ; he returned to his home in Samarcand, and India was free from invasion for a century and a quarter, when Baber Khan of Bokhara, descended from both Genghis Khan and Timour, in the year 1526, at the age of 42, led his conquering hordes to Delhi, where two years later he firmly established himself, founding the Mogul dynasty, the last remnants of which were swept away like old rubbish when the avenging army of England, twenty years ago, captured Delhi, after it had been in possession of the mutineers of the Bengal army for several months.

Baber's was not the last invasion of Hindostan.

Nadir Shah, king of Persia, swept through the land only 150 years since, but when he retired, laden with the spoils of a hundred cities, the Koh-i-noor diamond and the Peacock throne being part of the plunder, the land was again to be laid waste by his successor, Ahmed, who on three several occasions led his Afghan hordes to Delhi. After the last great battle at Paniput, the victorious Ahmed appears to have been satisfied, and retired to his Afghan capital.

I would here pause to remark that in the year when Ahmed last sacked Delhi, the English Clive won the battle of Plassy. As a recent writer has remarked, at Plassy the first step was taken in stemming those terrible waves of conquest which had only plunder and cruelty for their object.

So we see that the first and last of the invaders were Persians ; and be it remembered that each of these conquering armies had passed through the Afghan defiles and across the River Indus. Where then is the stragetical frontier of British India ? I think the English are about to settle this by the permanent occupation of the interior of these famous passes.

We are apt to think of Afghanistan as having natural bounda-

ries, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. The sketch of conquest I have just given proves the historical reverse ; for instance, Mahmoud of Ghuzni ruled from Ispahan, in Persia, to what is now Lahore, in the Punjaub ; Tamerlane, from Samarcand, now Russia, to Delhi in the plains of India. You have heard how little account was made of vast distances and natural obstacles ; how Afghanistan was not a frontier, or barrier for a frontier, but actually the centre of great empires.

Let us now take a brief survey of the country. Afghanistan bounded on the North and East by immense mountain ranges and on the South and West by vast tracts of sandy desert opposes to external hostility natural defenses of a formidable character. The general aspect of the country is wild and forbidding, but not unwearied by spots of gentler beauty in the valleys and on the plains.

The towns are few and far between, the people, or rather the inhabitants—for in our sense, as a people, as homogenous, there is really no Afghan nation—the races there, or the group of races, are hardy, vigorous mountaineers : the score of tribes are all alike in their characteristics, brave, independent, but of a turbulent, vindictive character ; they are only happy when fighting ; since they have been known in history, they have lived in a state of chronic warfare. Civil war has a natural tendency to perpetuate itself, and among savage tribes, blood is always crying for blood. Revenge is a virtue among them, and like the Corsican vendetta, retribution passes from father to son, and murder becomes a solemn duty. An Afghan is either a soldier, a farmer on a small scale, or a shepherd ; never a trader—trade is left in the hands of Hindus or other aliens.

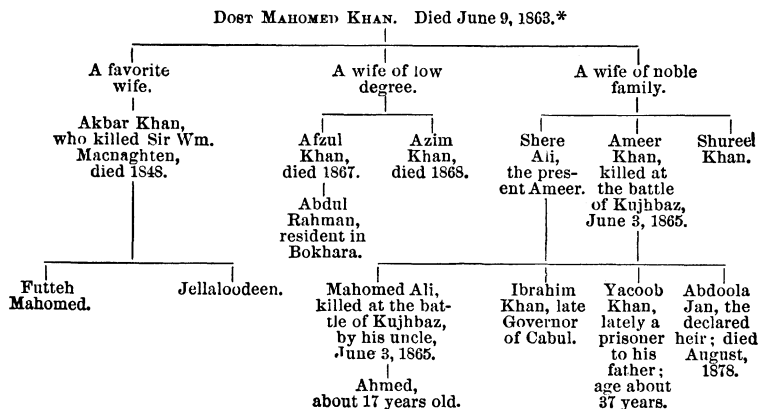
These mountaineers have certainly redeeming traits. They are of a cheerful lively disposition, hospitable and generous ; a stranger is always welcomed, and even a deadly enemy is safe under an Afghan's roof.

According to Russian estimates the various tribes could, if united, turn out 250,000 warriors, but then they never are united.

I will not detain you by any account of these tribes—the mere roll of names would be very tiresome ; but I most confidently refer you for all such information to a *brochure*, recently prepared and published in this city, by two brother officers of my old and dearly loved regiment, Captains Jackson and Wyndham, the last named being the friend who has kindly consented to assist me this evening in

explaining the map and the views which will be presently thrown on the screen.

For a correct understanding of the present difficulties between the English and the Afghans, or rather the Afghan chief, Shere Ali—for the English protest that they have no quarrel with the Afghan nation—I would draw your attention to the genealogical chart now spread before you.



It is not necessary that we go further back in this genealogy than to Dost Mahomed Khan, to whom so many references have been made. At his death in 1863, Dost Mahomed by his will left his throne to his fourth son, Shere Ali, setting aside the claims of the elder half-brothers, Afzul Khan and Azim Khan. These men were not inclined to submit, and rebelled. Afzul was captured and imprisoned. After their defeat, Shere Ali's younger brother, Ameen Khan, tried his hand against the Ameer, and at the battle of Kujhbaz, in 1865, he killed with his own hand Mahomed Ali, the Ameer's eldest and favorite son, and was in his turn slaughtered by that Prince's followers.

Afzul Khan's son, Abdul Rahman, had escaped to Bokhara, and there married a daughter of the chief of that country. On the death of his uncle Ameen, he returned from Bokhara, and was joined

* From "Afghanistan, and the Relations of that Country to England and Russia." By A. G. Constable. Published by Harper & Brothers, New York.

by his other uncle, Azim. After several severe battles, Shere Ali was defeated in May, 1866; Afzul was released and declared Ameer. Shere Ali took refuge in Herat, where his son Yacoob commanded. A year afterwards Afzul Khan died, and was shortly after followed to the Moslem paradise by his brother Azim Khan, and then Shere Ali won the position he has ever since retained, and won it in a great measure by the warlike capacity of his son Yacoob. Abdul Rahman had fled beyond the Oxus to his father-in-law, the Ameer of Bokhara, where he has since resided, a pensioner on the bounty of Russia. It is said that Gen. Kauffman, the Russian Governor-General of the Khanates, gives him fifteen thousand dollars a year. This man is, therefore, one of the main factors in the present state of affairs, as he may be used as the Russian *protégé* to the throne of Cabul, on the ground that his father, Afzul Khan, was the rightful successor to Dost Mahomed.

Shere Ali has always held it as a grievance against the English Government that they did not support his claims to the throne at the time of his father's death, but that, on the contrary, when his brothers Afzul and Azim had successively held the capital of Cabul, the English Government had recognized them in turn as *de facto* rulers. When he had firmly seated himself on the Musnud, he felt that he owed no gratitude to his southern neighbors; nevertheless, at the famous conference with Lord Mayo at Umballa in 1869, he tried to persuade his Lordship to recognize his youngest and favorite son, Abdoolla Jan, as the legitimate heir to the throne of Cabul, asking in plain terms that, if necessary, this succession should be supported by men and money, a request which was positively refused. But this was not Shere Ali's only grievance, for in 1870 Yacoob Khan, the elder son, understanding that Abdoolla Jan was declared heir, rose in rebellion against his father, and it is said, with what truth I do not know, that this rebellion was countenanced by the English authorities, and that they even talked of adding Candahar to the rebel son's lieutenancy.

After the rebellion of 1870 had collapsed, Yacoob fled to Persia, and in the year following, assisted by the Persians, Yacoob again took possession of Herat. A kind of peace was then patched up between father and son by the personal influence of Lord Mayo, and in September, 1871, he returned from Cabul, where he had been visit-

ing his father, to Herat, as Governor, but with a strong body of his father's personal adherents surrounding him. These men kept Yacoob in a constant turmoil with Shere Ali, reporting to Cabul everything which might appear disadvantageous to him. It is said that after Abdoolla Jan's formal nomination as heir in 1873, Yacoob intrigued with the Persians and Turcomans, and it is even asserted that he sought help of the Russians against his father, but he met with no success. In 1874 he was again summoned to Cabul, but, suspecting treachery, demanded a safe conduct, which was granted. His fears were not ill-grounded, for on his arrival he was at once placed in confinement. The Indian Government interceded with the Ameer to spare his life. This interference was successful, but it is said that his imprisonment, which lasted until recent events compelled his father to release him, has been so rigorous and harsh that his intellect has suffered. Ayub, his younger brother, when Yacoob went to Cabul, fled to Persia, where he has ever since resided. While this was the state of things in Afghanistan, the Russians had been slowly working their way towards the Afghan provinces beyond the Hindu-Koosh, and in 1873, at the time of the Russian attack on Khiva, Shere Ali sent an envoy to Simla, to lay before the English Governor-General the fears which he reasonably entertained as to the ultimate aims of Russia. The envoy was met by Lord Northbrook with the statement that the Ameer's alarm about Russia was premature ; that his demands as to the nature and extent of the assistance to be rendered by the English were extravagant, and that in fact the whole course of the policy which he desired to initiate was calculated to provoke rather than avert the crisis which he dreaded. The Ameer thought differently. If he could not secure an English guarantee against Russian invasion, it was natural that he should turn to Russia for a guarantee against English aggression. He foresaw, or thought that he foresaw, that there must ultimately be collision between England and Russia in Central Asia ; that he must therefore make his choice between the opposing forces, and cast in his lot with one or the other. He did all that the English could reasonably ask. He offered them the first chance, but that beggarly policy which has come to be ironically known by the term "masterly inactivity" ruled the hour, and it was then that Shere Ali began seriously to entertain the hope

of making Russia his friend, in place of England; and so commenced a series of discourtesies to England, which culminated in the refusal to receive the embassy headed by his own personal friend, Sir Neville Chamberlain, which, as we know, was not allowed even to enter the country. The real difference between the English policy and the Afghan is simply this—that the Ameer would have liked to put his own country in a state of defence against any possible Russian aggression at the cost of England, but he would not allow those defences to be undertaken or superintended by English officers not under his immediate orders, which was one of the conditions on which alone the British authorities would give him the benefit of their powerful co-operation. Shere Ali has all along had a dread—and a very righteous dread, too—of sinking his sovereignty and accepting the position of a prince protected by a foreign government, really fearing that Afghanistan would be absorbed into the Indian Empire; and so it came to pass that when he was finally satisfied that he could obtain English aid only at the expense of his independence, he courteously received the Russian envoy at his capital, while refusing to permit the Englishman to enter his dominions.

And now I have brought this hasty and necessarily very imperfect sketch down to the present day. It may be asked, what right has England to invade Afghanistan because the chief of that country preferred the alliance of Russia to that of England? I answer, the right of self-preservation. England has assumed the protectorate of two hundred and fifty millions of people, and it is her bounden duty to see that they do not suffer by any wave of conquest similar to those which afflicted Hindostan for so many hundred years. What would it advantage the people of Hindostan to change English for Russian rule? The Russians govern with the iron hand of military power. The English government of India is based on civil law, right and justice, although sustained by mighty strength. The great feudal chiefs of India, Hindu and Mahommedan, understand this difference between English and Russian rule, and are showing it by the support they give to the local government in the present war. With our knowledge of the facility with which Russia could, in alliance with Persia and the Afghans, enter the plains of India, surely we may concede that it is the paramount duty of England to take every precaution against such a result.

Persia has lain for many years prostrate at the feet of Russia. The Shah-in-Shah is merely the henchman of the Russian Czar. Even if time allowed me, I should not enter upon any history of the advance of Russia through Asia, because, I am happy to say, before long this society will have the advantage of listening to a gentleman far more competent than I can pretend to be to instruct and interest them on this subject. But I may say that a very large force of Russians is now, and has been for some years, within a few weeks' march of the northern passes into Afghanistan. During the past year, when there was every appearance of an armed collision between England and Russia, there is no possible doubt that the latter country had taken measures to avail herself of the position she had gained on the frontiers of the British Empire in the East. It is asserted by Sir Henry Rawlinson, the most competent authority in England, that General Kauffman, the Russian Governor-General in Central Asia, had made every preparation to move upon Afghanistan. Three army corps were prepared to move upon the Oxus, the dividing line between Turkestan and the northern provinces of the Afghan. The main column, under Kauffman himself, marched from Tashkend through Samarcand to Djam, the extreme point of Russia's frontier to the south, a right flanking column ascending the Oxus from Petro Alexandrovsk, twenty miles above and opposite Khiva, to Charjui, the point at which the river is crossed by the high road from Bokhara to Merve. A left flanking column was to follow the course of the Kuzil-zu [Red River] from Samarcand to the Afghan town of Kunduz. This is believed to have been the programme. How much was actually accomplished is not known. It is only certain that the main column under Kauffman remained at Djam for some weeks, waiting orders to advance to Kilif, the main passage of the Oxus into Afghanistan. Thence they expected to have an unobstructed road through Meymeneh to Herat, the objective point of so many expeditions, hoping, it would appear, to keep open their communications with their base by a simultaneous occupation of Merve by the column from Charjui on the one side, and by a large force under General Loumakin, gradually pushing its way eastward from the Caspian, on the other. This last-named force Rawlinson believes is, in all probability, still bent on reaching Merve. The

success or failure of the attempt must greatly, if not wholly, depend upon the Persian Government and its recently formed allies, the Aktals and Tekkeh Turcomans.

These Tekkehs are the most warlike of the Turcoman race, and are settled, if a nomadic people can ever be called settled, along the River Attrek and the skirts of the hills from the Caspian to Merve ; they number 60,000 tents, or—five persons to a tent—300,000 souls. If they are brought under the influence of Russia they, with the Salor and Saruk tribes, could readily furnish a force of 50,000 men, which, under Russian officers, would be the most formidable light cavalry in the world. Appearances at present, however, are, that the King of Persia is himself trying to induce these very Turcomans to become his allies and friends. However, there is no accounting for Persian policy, which has always been marked by the extremest duplicity, and the latest intelligence is, that the Shah has despatched a considerable force into Seistan, nominally to punish a refractory chief; but there is a strong suspicion that this force is to be used in preventing the entrance into Persia of fugitives from the banks of the Attrek, as the Russians under General Loumakin move along that river. The Russian journals of recent date make no secret of Kauffman's intention to occupy the oasis of Merve, if he can reach it. He can only do so by the connivance of Persia and the consent of the Tekkehs. Once at Merve, the Russians are within ten easy marches of Herat.

Whether the Russian policy is really antagonistic to the English rule in India or not, it is, as I have said, impossible for the Indian Government to shut its eyes to the possibilities of a Russian, Persian, Turcoman, and Usbeg force marching on Herat. We all know the steps which England has taken to prevent the present consummation of any such plan, if plan there be. We know the English forces have entered Afghanistan through the Bolan, the Peiwar, and the Khyber Passes ; that they are settled in winter quarters at Jellalabad, Ghirisk, or Candahar. We hear that Shere Ali has left the defense of his capital to his warrior, but long captive son, Yacoob ; one report locating the Ameer himself at Herat, with a strong force under his command ; another stating that he has fled to seek aid and comfort from the White Czar in St.

Petersburgh; and, finally, that when there he will ask for a European Congress (like that lately held at Berlin) to decide the dispute between himself and the British. This may be so, for there is nothing too marvellous for the Ameer to undertake in his desperation.

I close by expressing a belief that, in spite of Czars and Conferences, the English have this time entered Afghanistan to remain there, occupying not the whole country, but in all probability a line stretching from Ghirisk on the West to the passes into Cashmere on the East, having a force at Chitral checkmating any contemplated advance of the Russians through Kashgaria.